

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 North S. Herrera Way, (formerly N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street), Phoenix, AZ 85012

**March 14, 2013**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners**

George Cushing, Chair  
Jefferson Begay  
Philip Hanson  
Wayne Krula  
Ronald Perkins  
David Toliver, Sr

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

Joey Strickland, Director  
Robert Barnes, Deputy Director  
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director  
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to the Director  
Judy Smith, Admin. Secretary

**Absent**

Jeffrey Olson (Excused)  
Brett Rustand (Absent)  
Lionel Sanchez (Excused)

**Guests**

Terri Gent, Sierra Vista United Veterans Council

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Chairman George Cushing. Mr. Cushing asked if there were any corrections to the February minutes. Commissioner Hanson motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Perkins seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Communications** – A letter was received at ADVS on February 15th from Joan Serviss, Executive Director of the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness, inviting the commissioners to attend the Arizona Veterans Stand Down March 8-10 in the Veterans Memorial Coliseum at the state fairgrounds. The letter was forwarded to Chairman Cushing on February 15th.

**Agency Announcements and Updates** – Colonel Strickland advised the commission that Governor Jan Brewer has been selected by the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) as “Veterans Advocate of the Year”. In its 60 years of existence, this is the first time a sitting governor has received this award. National NASDVA President, Admiral Clyde Marsh of Alabama and Brigadier General Les Beavers, former director of Veterans Affairs in Kentucky and Executive Director of NASA, will present the “Iron Mike” award to Governor Brewer April 30th at 10:00 a.m. on the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor of the State Capitol.

Colonel Strickland, Robert Barnes and Homer Rodgers of ADVS will attend the presentation. Commissioners are invited to attend this presentation. It is an honor and an indication of the great things Arizona is doing.

Colonel Strickland believes the number one issue facing Veterans returning from tours of duty is finding jobs. On March 1<sup>st</sup> ADVS, the Arizona National Guard Code Force Team, AZ Coalition for Military Families, Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), AZ Commerce Authority and US. Dept. of Labor Veterans Education and Training Service, hosted an employers’ summit at National Guard Headquarters. The summit was geared toward human resources executives of companies and how to assist those who want to hire Veterans but aren’t achieving the success they think they should in hiring Veterans. Executives are concerned that their job postings aren’t worded properly for reaching Veterans. There seems to be a disconnect in getting the hiring community and Veterans together. There were 190 executives in attendance.

ADVS offered their assistance for companies who were experiencing difficulty in hiring Veterans. Similar events will be held in Northern and Southern Arizona in the future.

Chairman Cushing said there are people out there that are committed to hiring Veterans. In some cases, if there is a Veteran coordinator on staff with a company when a Veteran is interviewed, the hiring process can be moved through the system faster.

Commissioner Perkins inquired about House Bill 8424-Veteran Hiring Preference Tax Credit and whether the bill would pass. Colonel Strickland said the bill has passed the House and is in the Senate. ADVS does not have the manpower to supervise the program and if the bill passes, we are not sure how we are going to administer the program. ADVS is not against the bill; just challenged on how to administer it.

The bill would require ADVS to notify every Veteran within the state of all available job openings within 72 hours, including all political subdivisions which includes school boards. We are looking at the cost to implement the program, which would be nearly \$1 million to notify every Veteran in the state. The program is supported by Iraqi Veterans and Senator Alberto Cardenas. Colonel Strickland stated the program puts ADVS in an awkward situation. While we are here to assist Veterans and are advocates for Veteran employment, the high demand of inquiries and notices of this program would overwhelm our current system. Without additional funding, we would not meet the 72 hour request.

Mr. Barnes commented that the bill has great sentiment but is poorly written. It doesn't include appropriation or allow ADVS the time to implement the program. The agency has no money to make this happen; it would require at least 2 staff members to run the program.

Commissioner Hanson questioned whether action could be taken to amend the bill in the Senate. Mr. Barnes said the bill has already been amended more than once and there would not be enough time to put forth an amendment that would make a difference at this point.

ADVS would be assuming the task that should be going to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists/Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (DVOPS/LVER) and the Department of Labor. In preparation for the bill passing on April 1, retired Colonel Steve Weintraub will be hired at ADVS. He is an Iraqi and Afghanistan Veteran from Twenty-nine Palms, CA. Colonel Weintraub grew up in Phoenix and is a member of the Jewish War Veterans. His job will be solely to work with government agencies, civilian companies and Veteran organizations to put Veterans to work. If SB 8424 passes, he may supervise that program.

Colonel Weintraub will also oversee Veterans Center Campuses. ADVS is mandated by the legislature to work these campuses and a statewide education summit at Northern Arizona University (NAU) is planned for next month. We talked with the NAU Board of Regents and are working with universities and administrators around the state on the campus of NAU. No date has been set for the summit, but we will share that information with commissioners when it becomes available, should they wish to attend.

ADVS wants to support Veterans who are attending classes and, in order to do that, we need to be able to capture data on the number of student Veterans on campus, how they're doing in classes and later, graduation rates. Colonel Weintraub would oversee that program. He will work with community service organizations; the VFW, American Legion, etc.

Colonel Strickland reported that 2 surveys were conducted recently at the Arizona State Veteran Home and the Veteran Home scored well on both.

Mr. Barnes reported that the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), changed nursing home ratings to a star rating a few years ago and the Phoenix Veteran Home, formerly rated at 2, is now rated 4 of the 5 star rating. It is a milestone to have reached that point. Colleen Rundell is doing very well as the home's administrator, along with her staff, to make this happen.

Colonel Strickland reported the Tucson home is doing well. Two Federal and State surveys are expected during the summer and we don't anticipate a problem. General Eric Shinseki considers the

Tucson Veteran Home the model for the nation in Veteran Nursing Homes. It is more a community assisted living facility than a nursing home.

The Tucson Veteran Home administrator was advised to move forward with opening the 4<sup>th</sup> wing. Eighty Veterans are currently living in the home; about 20 are there temporarily for rehabilitation or physical therapy services.

ADVS has reached out to the Tucson Veteran community inviting them to host meetings at the facility. The Tucson VFW and Purple Heart Associations have held meetings in the Tucson Veteran Home.

ADVS is proud of its two Veteran Homes and we recognize they don't meet the needs of all our Veterans around the state. We are working to pursue future Veteran nursing homes in areas such as Flagstaff, Kingman and Yuma. Because it is an economic issue, the agency is hesitant to go before the legislature and governor to request funding at this time, but may do so next year.

Noting that the next big ADVS project is the Northern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in the Belmont area of Flagstaff, Colonel Strickland turned the meeting over to Homer Rodgers for a project report.

Mr. Rodgers reported that ADVS submitted 35% of the plans for the first of 3 reviews on the project to Washington D.C. The project is coming along well. We expect 100% review by mid-May, after which the job will be placed for bid. Construction is expected to start in August or September with about 18 months to complete the first phase of development.

We anticipate completion of the addition of 2,600 niches to the Sierra Vista Cemetery by mid-May. When a firm completion date is received from the contractor, we will provide a 6 week notice before holding the dedication.

As mentioned last month, ADVS is using the Capital Outlying Plan of reimbursements received for previous upgrades as opposed to asking the legislature for the 35% funding to pay for the Phoenix Veteran Home upgrades to electronic medical records. After the upgrade, both Veteran Homes will have the same electronic medical records system. Additional upgrades include replacing the nurse call system and the current security system in the Alzheimer's unit at the Phoenix Veteran Home.

Homer Rodgers noted that he and Colonel Strickland spent a power-packed 3 days in the Navajo Nation March 4-6 when they met with Assistant Secretary John Garcia of the Veteran Administration's Department of Inter-governmental Affairs, Washington, D.C., Donna Jacobs, Director of the Prescott VA Hospital, Stephanie Birdwell of the Navajo Nation Tribal Relations Office, the administrator of Indian Health Services (IHS) and director of their Veteran Affairs, the president of the Navajo Nation, and other members from the Navajo Nation.

Along with housing and other VA services, they discussed transportation for medical services in rural areas that the VA is establishing. A transportation pilot program is being conducted by Ms. Jacobs at the VA Hospital in Prescott. The onsite Prescott VA medical mobile van was quite remarkable. The fully equipped medical mobile van with tele-medicine capability and diagnostic equipment can offer assistance in any part of the state.

The proposed Veteran Home in Chinle was discussed at length in regard to changing current rules to include tribal governments for the 35% reimbursement and per diem. It is our understanding that when he returned to Washington, Assistant Secretary John Garcia was to meet with Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, about the issue to gain support in Washington, D.C.

Representative Albert Hale was instrumental in getting House Concurrent Memorial-HCM 2004, before the legislature, which passed the Arizona House of Representatives in February. HCM 2004 allows tribal nations to receive construction reimbursements for Veteran nursing care homes built on

American Indian lands. The Arizona Legislature will ask Congress to go forward on the matter. The issue is being considered on two fronts now. The Navajo Nation will be the test for the entire nation.

Mr. Rodgers noted that he, Colonel Strickland and Mike Klier met with the San Carlos Apache Nation Tribal Council regarding their plan to build a cemetery on tribal lands. The President of the Navajo Nation directed David Nez, Director of Veterans Affairs, to go forward with building the Veterans Cemetery. Subsequently, Homer met with Vernon James, Deputy General Manager for the tribe, about getting online and going forward with the grant process, as the project will eventually be 100% funded.

Mr. Rodgers is to meet with Anthony Smith, District 4 supervisor of Pinal County, on March 26<sup>th</sup> regarding the Marana project. Anthony Smith is the former mayor of Maricopa and sits on the county board of supervisors. Because the cemetery is close to the Pinal County line, it will affect District 4.

ADVS received a commitment from the Pinal County Association of Governments stating they will fund building the 1.1 mile road from Air Park Road to the site. The road will make a second entrance to the site and alleviate those coming from the north having to go to Marana and backtrack 4 miles to access the site.

Chairman Cushing asked if we had received the deed to the property yet. Mr. Rodgers said we are talking with the Ki family attorneys to get this accomplished. A title search and deed are being drawn and ADVS will have to complete a boundary phase 1 environmental analysis for suitability of the land that will take 4 to 6 weeks. By this time next month, the analysis should be complete.

Colonel Strickland noted that ADVS is ready to break ground in Flagstaff in September when the Corps. of Engineers finishes their work. We are modifying the timeline of construction to redesign the metal shelter. Instead of open sides, the structure will have sliding closures on the sides and space heaters to heat the building. He noted that the back wall of the administration building will be entirely glass for the view facing the San Francisco Peaks mountain range. Planners were respectful of the culture of the area and planned the building with a view of the mountains.

Colonel Strickland said we anticipate Navajo Veterans being buried there and we wish to respect the Navajo culture and the people who live in the area, and for those who will be buried there, as well as prepare the cemetery for the majority of Veterans.

Commissioner Begay noted that the San Francisco Peaks is one of 4 sacred mountain ranges that are significant to the Navajo, Hopi and Hualapai Tribes. This special respect for their cultures is appreciated.

Colonel Strickland noted that the Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF) continues to support Arizona's deployed Veteran families. The fund has awarded 24 grants totaling \$66,000 so far in 2013. The program served 169 families with more than \$530,000 awarded in 2012 and we will continue the fund as long as it is needed. The program is expected to run through 2018. It may not be needed that long, which remains to be seen.

Chairman Cushing said there have been concerns by those who don't understand the program requirements that for every year it's been in existence the program has achieved its \$1 million goal in donations, and payments have been in the \$500,000 to \$600,000 range. There are some concerns by the general public about where the money goes. Commissioners advise those who question that whatever money is not paid out each year goes into the Veterans Donation Fund.

Colonel Strickland added that the remaining funds will go to the Veteran Donation Fund which then reverts back to Veteran Service Organizations. Since its beginning in 2008, the MFRF program has distributed \$1.2 million in more than 230 payments to Veterans and Veteran families.

Colonel Strickland noted that the Chinle Veteran Home is a \$14 million dollar project and that funding is coming from the Navajo Housing Authority. He noted that Commissioner Begay has been instrumental in working with the Navajo Housing Authority to get approval and inquired if approval has been granted by the Housing Authority. Mr. Begay said funding was approved and the housing authority is now helping tribal members draft a solicitation for design services.

ADVS will continue to address future issues that arise, along with per diems and payments that were already mentioned at a previous meeting.

Mr. Begay commended ADVS for their fine work with the Navajo Nation in making contact with proper leadership and getting their support. It is remarkable that the Navajo Nation is the first to build a Veteran Nursing Home.

Colonel Strickland noted that ADVS has a very close relationship with the Navajo and Hopi Nations and is developing a close relationship with the San Carlos Apache Nation.

Colonel Strickland advised the Commission that ADVS and the Arizona Military Museum will honor all Arizona Indian Vietnam Veterans on May 25<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the start of the Vietnam War. The special event will be held at the Heard Museum, 2301 North Central Avenue. Sign in is at 6:30 and the program begins at 7:00 p.m. As the Commemorative Vietnam Veteran Headquarters, ADVS is tasked to hold 2 Vietnam Veteran events per year.

ADVS will host a statewide event for Vietnam Veterans with dinner on October 7<sup>th</sup> at the Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center. Each year the attendance has grown; we expect 600-700 Veterans to attend this year. The agency wants to focus on all branches of the service. This year will honor Marine Veterans who served in Vietnam. Next year's event will honor the Air Force and later, the Navy will be honored. General Anthony Zinni, a 4 star Marine General who served in Vietnam and former Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), has agreed to be the keynote speaker.

Colonel Strickland noted that ADVS hosted the annual Arizona Stand Down March 8-10 at the State Fairgrounds Coliseum. We wish we didn't have to hold stand downs, as that would mean we don't have homeless Veterans in our community, but that is not reality and the stand down is necessary and will always be something we do. The stand down is part of the rescue operation of our homeless Veterans wherein 1,510 Veterans were served with clothing, shoes, health exams and food. Hundreds of misdemeanor fines were taken care of and 600 hours of community services were provided. He noted that Sean Price, ADVS Homeless Veteran Services Coordinator, did a wonderful job in coordinating with volunteers for the event. We've had nothing but accolades from the community regarding the stand down.

Chairman Cushing noted there was a substantial increase of women Veterans this year. Katherine Harding reported a total of 132 homeless women Veterans were served at the stand down.

Colonel Strickland and ADVS Executive Staff attended the Mana House Grand Opening of the Veteran Women's Center. The transitional living center for women Veterans has 16 beds and a special private area with no contact with males. Mana House offers a supportive living environment and services to assist Veteran women on a path to independence and self-sufficiency. Congresswoman Krysten Sinema and Sharon Helman, Director of the VA, attended the grand opening.

ADVS' ultimate goal all year is to provide programs to our Veterans and try to prevent homelessness. The stand down is one of these programs. We are working with per diem entities such as the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, which combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Another program is Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). Under the SSVF Program, the VA awards grants to private non-profit organizations that provide supportive services to very low-income Veteran families living in or transitioning to permanent housing. We try to get them into jobs and later transition them to permanent housing. This is an ongoing program ADVS recognizes the need for and we will always work to restore Veterans' dignity.

Commissioner Krula questioned why there is a surge in homeless women Veterans and why it's happening. Colonel Strickland said there is no specific answer and that 14% of the military today are women who are going through the same number of deployments as the men.

Colonel Strickland said the number of deployments our young people are being subjected to is troubling, which is causing the highest level of divorce rates of any time in the history of the Armed Forces. It is affecting the women Veterans who are more nurturing than men and when a family splits and children are involved, the women keep the children.

Veterans come home from active duty expecting to get jobs; sometimes they don't get a job and their lives turn downward and it leads to a divorce. When they can't make it on their own, women Veterans and their children may have to live in a shelter, or they become homeless. We don't want women Veterans having to deal with homelessness.

Chairman Cushing noted that it is a nationwide issue for women Veterans in making sure our Veterans have jobs to come home to. Some can't stay in the military because of the reduction of troops in Afghanistan. It is a serious problem for our Veterans who come home and can't find work to support their families and it often leads to divorce. We will have this problem for awhile until jobs become more plentiful.

Colonel Strickland is heartened that the Federal VA is developing more programs for women. The VA has women-only clinics where many services are performed. The women don't feel threatened or intimidated. The Department of Defense (DOD) is addressing women's sexual trauma issues, which is a nationwide issue. Addressing this matter is long overdue.

Chairman Cushing personally thanked the agency on his behalf and all Veterans for all it does and continues to do for our Veterans. He has seen a big change from when he came to ADVS. Staff are doing all they can to make the Veteran community a better place.

ADVS is planning this year's Women's Veteran Conference and may bring a new Women's Veteran Coordinator to the agency. We are looking at combining our Women's Veteran Program with the Federal VA Program. We don't have all the specifics just now for this year's conference, but ADVS will continue to honor Women Veterans.

Colonel Strickland noted that Homer Rodgers has become involved in the "Missing in America" Program. Mr. Rodgers said he has had the privilege of attending 3 burials and a 4<sup>th</sup> will take place in Sierra Vista on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Perkins asked how the location and identification process starts; does it start with the mortuary and does the container indicate it holds Veterans remains?

Mr. Rodgers said the branch of service is noted on the urn. The fact finders have to be absolutely certain they are Veteran remains. He noted that it is a lengthy process to identify remains from years past and notify family members of the burial. Researchers start with the branch of service the Veteran served in. It takes about 3 months to complete the research.

The people who research and verify records of deceased Veterans through mortuaries and other means have found Veterans' remains who are literally sitting on a shelf, missing in America. Sometimes WWII Veteran remains are found. More than 120 Veterans have already been buried and

the number is expected to rise by 100 more before the end of 2013. All five branches of the military are represented.

March 20<sup>th</sup> will mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> interment of "Missing in America" Veterans; all 5 branches of the military will participate. Colonel Strickland noted that one of the Veterans buried recently was a World War II aviator who had received a Distinguished Flying Cross Award.

Mr. Rodgers noted the police were stationed every 500 ft. and standing at attention for the burial procession. The ceremony begins with a mortuary procession. At a recent burial, cars were stopped along the road and people got out of their cars, some were saluting, to honor the procession of Veterans being escorted to their final resting place.

Commissioner Begay told of Billy Attakai, a World War II Veteran from his hometown near Winslow, AZ, who returned to the reservation from combat, and was suffering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After World War II, people weren't aware of PTSD, which was not a diagnosis at that time.

The Veteran drank heavily, became hard of hearing and Mr. Begay remembers that people made fun of him. After his death, the only marker for his grave was a wooden pole to mark that he is buried in an area other than a cemetery. He was never honored with a military funeral and 21 gun salute, nor did he receive a proper burial, headstone and marker for his military service, as he should have been. Mr. Begay would like to see the "Missing in America" program started in the rural areas.

Colonel Strickland said Tanya Dooline, the ADVS Veteran Benefit Counselor in the Chinle office, can order a headstone and marker for this Veteran. These are free to our Veterans and he encouraged Mr. Begay to contact Tanya to order a headstone and marker. Mr. Begay will look into this matter with Tanya Dooline. Colonel Strickland will also follow up with Tanya.

Colonel Strickland told Mr. Begay to let ADVS know if he becomes aware of any other Veterans who did not receive a burial grave marker or headstone. We can see that a grave marker and headstone are ordered for those Veterans.

Colonel Strickland said Mr. Begay could be instrumental in helping the Navajo Nation build a cemetery. President Shelley told David Nez to move forward with the project. The Navajo Nation Council would need to put forth \$400,000 as a good faith deposit to get the project started. The \$400,000 would be returned after one year. ADVS would need someone to help monitor the project and be sure there is an emphasis on getting the good faith deposit. Colonel Strickland would like to work with Mr. Begay on this matter. Commissioner Begay said he would be happy to be of assistance for the project.

Commissioner Krula remarked that 2013 is a significant year for Veterans in Arizona. The Commission should take note of the honors that have been bestowed upon our state. He noted that Colonel Strickland received national recognition as a top leader in Veterans' services and secondly, Governor Brewer was acknowledged as one of the leaders in Veterans' services in the nation and is receiving the "Veterans Advocate of the Year" award. He said the Commission needs to officially take note of these honors.

Chairman Cushing said the governor's ceremony would be a good example for commissioners to attend and honor our governor.

Mr. Barnes noted that in 4 years, Colonel Strickland has brought more than \$32 million in Federal monies for Veterans' services in the state since becoming Director of ADVS.

Mr. Cushing noted remarkable changes have been made in these 4 years and they can certainly be seen in the two Veteran homes and the Sierra Vista Cemetery.

Commissioner Toliver brought attention to Senate Bill 1128 – Adopt the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in March as Commemoration Day for Tuskegee Airmen.

Mr. Toliver entered the Tuskegee Airmen forces 14 years after the war ended and is a founding member of the Arizona Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. March is a very important month for the Tuskegee Airmen. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in March, 2007 when the Tuskegee Airmen received the Congressional Gold Medal. There were about 300 airmen at that time.

The association began with 16,000 members; there are 85 remaining members and 7 of those members live in Arizona; 3 of the 7 are active. As historian, Mr. Toliver was charting the passing of the Tuskegee airmen for a 3 year period. We were losing better than 1 a week from about 16,000, with the average age being 86 years of age.

Commissioner Toliver and Dave Hampton, ADVS Public Information Officer, proposed a bill to adopt the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of March as Commemoration Day for Tuskegee Airmen. The bill passed the House and Senate committees and it has received considerable notice. The goal is to see that Tuskegee Airmen will always be remembered and their legacy celebrated in years to come.

Chairman Cushing said the recognition is long overdue and hopefully people will remember the sacrifices the Tuskegee Airmen made in the war. They served their country well.

Mr. Toliver noted that a few movies have been made about the Tuskegee Airmen and that Hollywood embellishes some of the facts but the post-war movie, "Tuskegee Airmen" from 16 years ago is about 85% correct.

**Introduction and Welcome to Invited guests** – Chairman Cushing recognized guest, Terri Gent of the Sierra Vista United Veterans Council.

Terri thanked the commission for the invitation to attend the meeting. She invited the commission to attend the Second Veteran Benefits Expo to be held on Veterans Day, November 11, 2013, in Sierra Vista. The first expo in 2011 was a great success. There has been great support to hold a second expo as well as a formal request from the VA. The Federal VA will issue a formal request closer to the event.

There will be a ceremony in the park before the Veterans Benefits Expo. The Veterans Day Parade will feature a flyover of four F-16 fighter jets, army marches, cannons, a proclamation to be read by the mayor and a 21 gun salute. Fenster Macher, Grand Marshal of the parade, will be honored as the Greater Sierra Vista Veteran of the Year.

The organization is requesting a small grant from ADVS to cover expenses.

Terri and her husband are invited to join the commissioners for lunch at My Mother's Restaurant after today's meeting.

**Outreach Activities for the Commission** – Several commissioners will be attending the "Armed Forces Day" Parade on May 18th in Flagstaff.

The "Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fair will be held April 25<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the University of Phoenix, 1625 W. Fountainhead Parkway, Tempe. Commissioners Perkins and Cushing will set up the table top display at this event. All commissioners are invited to join them.

Commissioner Begay will set a meeting for Veterans in Flagstaff the day before the "Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fair on April 24th. He talked with staff at Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick's office and is coordinating with an Army Veteran for Veterans to attend the meeting. He invited commissioners to sit in on the meeting and will advise the time and location.



Chairman Cushing noted that the commission has not held a town hall meeting and he intends to talk with the incoming Advisory Commission chair about a September or October town hall meeting in Flagstaff. The Flagstaff mayor is Veteran-friendly and, if we make preliminary plans now, we have several months to bring it together. Mr. Cushing will spearhead it now so the next chairman can follow through in planning a meeting. Mr. Cushing may be able to talk with the mayor at the Veterans Day Parade to start the process. The commission hasn't held a meeting in that area and it is a good opportunity to branch out. There is a Veteran interest in the community and the commission needs to follow up on it.

Commissioner Toliver noted it seems that if a city official is behind the Veterans, a meeting would draw a large crowd. If the mayor is involved, people would be in favor of it.

Commissioner Perkins will join Ron Shackle, ADVS Veteran Benefit Counselor from the Chandler office, for a Job Career Fair on Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Exhibit Building of the Arizona State Fairgrounds. The new table top display was brought to the meeting today for Mr. Perkins to take to the job fair. Commissioners are invited to come around 10 a.m. Mr. Perkins is joining Ron to learn what he does as a Veteran Benefits Counselor, plus being able to talk to Veterans and hearing Ron Shackle talk with veterans is beneficial for Mr. Perkins.

Commissioner Begay announced a meeting on March 27 at the Heard Museum regarding an American Indian Veterans Initiative for establishing a Native American Veterans Memorial at the Mall in Washington D.C. A Florida Seminole Tribal Chairman introduced an initiative to establish a Native American Veteran Memorial and asked Mr. Begay to help by setting up a meeting to discuss it. Colonel Strickland and Commissioners are invited to attend the meeting. Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick has a similar bill pending; our bill proposes that the memorial be on the National American Museum property.

Colonel Strickland asked if this was a separate memorial. There has been some confusion around the Vietnam Veteran community that tribes wanted to add an Indian Veteran to the Vietnam statue that is already there.

Mr. Begay said it is a separate memorial honoring American Indians for all wars. The plan is to combine the Seminole proposal with Ann Kirkpatrick's proposal.

**Open Discussion for the Good of the Order** – Commissioner Perkins talked about a 4 page article in the Air Force Association Magazine regarding Veteran Courts that are springing up across the nation and how successful they are. General Gregg Maxon was instrumental in getting them started in Arizona; in Phoenix and Tucson. He said this is a good topic to discuss with leaders in the cities the commissioners visit.

The article pointed out that Veterans get special treatment in Veteran Courts and questioned why they receive special treatment instead of going to jail, in some cases. They get help with drug and alcohol abuse because they are Veterans. The article questioned why Veterans get special treatment when other people don't.

Chairman Cushing said while he was in Washington D.C. the week of February 18<sup>th</sup>, unrelated to Veteran Courts, he heard comments by people about special treatment for Veterans and when he pointed out that Veterans have served their country and earned the benefits they receive, the people understood.

Colonel Strickland noted that Representative Krysten Siema works across the aisle in Congress and while she was in the Arizona State Legislature, she worked on Veterans' issues and accomplished many good things.

Chairman Cushing noted that a bill was passed to have "Veteran" noted on license plates. There has been some rebuttal. Mr. Cushing will follow up on the rebuttals and report his findings to the commission.

Commissioner Hanson noted a bill in the legislature standardizes special license plates and instead of having the name and colors of various organizations on special plates, there is one standard plate with a 3" block to note the organization's name. It will be interesting to see if this comes about. This year's legislature considered 2 special plates; the Veteran disabled plate and a Pat Tillman "Fallen Hero" plate.

Mr. Barnes noted that current license plates such as the Veteran Freedom and Purple Heart plates are exempt from the 3" block and that all future plates would be a standard plate with the 3" decal noting the special cause or interest name.

Mr. Barnes said the Veteran from Tucson and his sponsor, who recently proposed the new disabled Veteran plate, have withdrawn their request.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Hanson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Toliver. The meeting adjourned at 11:39 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held April 11, 2013.